

Testimony in Support of S.B. 991, An Act Concerning Medicaid Reimbursement for Community Health Workers

Human Services Committee
T.J. Clarke II, MBA
February 21, 2023

Dear Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, and esteemed members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is T.J. Clarke II and I live in Hartford, Connecticut. I stand in support of S.B. 991, An Act Concerning Medicaid Reimbursement for Community Health Workers. I serve as Executive Director at Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, Inc., located in Hartford, CT. Our mission is to strengthen and safeguard access to quality, affordable oral health services for all Connecticut residents. Our goal is for all Connecticut residents to have equal opportunity to obtain services needed to maintain good oral health.

Currently, Connecticut's Medicaid program does not reimburse Community Health Worker (CHW) services or incentivize health care providers to work with CHWs. Community health workers are an effective way to address inequities and promote health, particularly for low-income households served by Medicaid.

The role of Community Health Workers plays a vital role in helping to advance equity in our state. CHWs mitigate health disparities by providing information and helping people to navigate the healthcare system, connecting people to health insurance, community-based services, and health care providers, and providing social support throughout the screening, diagnosis, and treatment processes. Currently, 25 out of 50 states in our country established a Medicaid reimbursement program for CHW services which does not include Connecticut. Our state must create this type of program in order to decrease systematic health inequities that many residents in various communities face on a daily basis.

Medicaid reimbursement for community health workers should:

- Center community and CHW voices in all stages of design and implementation.
- Reimburse at rates high enough to employ CHWs at a livable wage and cover the costs of supervision, billing, and routine training.
- Cover a comprehensive list of CHW services.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testify in support of S.B. 991, An Act Concerning Medicaid Reimbursement for Community Health Workers and I ask for your full support on passing this bill.

Yours in service,

T.J. Clarke II
Executive Director
Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, Inc.